

specimens of this pretty little Sharp-tailed Finch. I have at present only one by me, a fine male, however, shot by Mr. J. G. Bell, of New York, on the 24th of May." He gives its habitat as "Upper Missouri prairies. Common." Professor Baird, in 1858, says (*Birds of North America*, 1858, p. 452): "I am obliged to copy the description of this rare Sparrow from Mr. Audubon, as I have no skin at hand. The type of the species was presented to me by Mr. Audubon, but it has somehow been mislaid." In the 'History of North American Birds' (Vol. I, 1874, p. 552) a second specimen is recorded as having been "received by the Smithsonian Institution from Washington Co., Texas, collected by Dr. Lincecum," but "in very poor condition, having been skinned for an alcoholic preparation and does not admit of a satisfactory description of the colors." This, then, was the only specimen known to be extant when the species was re-discovered in 1873 by Dr. Coues, "near Turtle Mountain, on the border of Dakota, latitude 39°," where a number were found together on August 9—the only occasion when they were noticed. The subsequent remarkable history of this long lost species need not be recounted, it having been found of late in numbers from the Upper Missouri region to as far south and east as South Carolina.

A specimen in the Maximilian Collection in the American Museum of Natural History, New York City, proves that a second specimen was really extant during this long interval. It still bears the original label in the handwriting of the Prince, as follows: "Ammodramus LeContei Audub. (*Emberiza* Audub.) Missouri. Mas." In the manuscript Catalogue of the Maximilian Collection (p. 171, genus 515, sp. 3) it is recorded as follows: "[*Coturniculus*] *Lecontei* Audub.: Bp.: (*Ammodramus Lecontei* Gray). Nord America, am oberer Missouri." There is no further clue to its history, but doubtless it was taken by the Prince on his North American journey, 1832-34, and hence some ten years before the discovery of the species by Audubon. As the Maximilian Collection was transferred to the American Museum in 1870, this specimen was in New York City for three years prior to the re-discovery of the species by Dr. Coues.

The specimen (No. 1916) is in an excellent state of preservation, though doubtless taken not less than half a century ago.

Another specimen of historic interest in the collection of the American Museum of Natural History is one of the original Bachmanian specimens of Swainson's Warbler (No. 25,348). This is from the Elliot Collection, Mr. Elliot having received it from Professor Baird.

A third specimen, of much local interest, is an example (No. 1236. ♀ ad.) of a Wheatear (*Saxicola wnanthe*), from the collection of Mr. D. G. Elliot, taken on Long Island, N. Y., but the date of capture is not given. It appears not to have been previously recorded.—J. A. ALLEN, *Am. Mus. Nat. Hist., New York City.*

Four Rare Birds in Northern California: Yellow Rail, Emperor Goose, European Widgeon, and Sabine's Ruffed Grouse.—While on the coast of Northern California in December, 1885, I visited the ornithological col-

lections of Mr. Charles Fiebig, who lives at Eureka, on Humboldt Bay. As Mr. Fiebig had informed me upon my arrival, that all his birds had been shot in the vicinity of Humboldt Bay, I was surprised and interested to find in his collection specimens of the Yellow Rail, the Emperor Goose, the European Widgeon, and Sabine's Ruffed Grouse, which I saw at once were rather extra-limital species, particularly the first two. Mr. Fiebig's account of these was as follows (transcribed from my note book):

**Porzana noveboracensis.** One specimen 1884, shot on the marsh at the mouth of Freshwater Creek, flowing into Humboldt Bay. A pair were seen but only one secured.

**Philacte canagica.** One specimen obtained on the bay in the winter of 1884. Others seen at long intervals.

**Mareca penelope.** One specimen shot on the bay in the winter of 1884. The only record of its occurrence there, according to Mr. Fiebig and the sportsmen of Eureka.

**Bonasa sabinii.** Only one specimen in the collection, but met with on several occasions in the deepest portions of the surrounding redwood forest.

Mr. Fiebig, now a very old man, is a German who came to America about 1850, and worked at his trade of wagon-making, in the city of Washington, until the war broke out, when he enlisted in the Union Army, and afterward settled in California. While living in Washington he became acquainted with North American birds by studying the Smithsonian collections. He is a taxidermist of far more than ordinary ability, but practices the art only as a pastime. His method of mounting is unique; after removing the skin, he carves a model of the bird's body in soft wood, with great exactness. The effigy is then covered with the skin, and the bird, after the eyes are added, is complete. I am bound to say that this is done with the skill of an artist, and the results secured by this method are excellent. Mr. Fiebig gave me an interesting account of his experiences as a Duck hunter on the shores of the Baltic Sea, when a boy.—CHAS. H. TOWNSEND, *Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.*

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## CORRESPONDENCE.

[Correspondents are requested to write briefly and to the point. No attention will be paid to anonymous communications.]

### The Classification of the Macrochires.

[SECOND LETTER.]

TO THE EDITORS OF THE AUK:—

*Sirs:* If the valuable space in the section reserved for your correspondence will admit of it, I have a few words to say in regard to the criticism passed upon my classification of the Macrochires, so far as I defined